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1425 COMMITTEE ON
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COMMITTEE ON
THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0502

Statement of Congressman Wally Herger CALFED Bay-Delta Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report

The CALFED plan provides California an historic opportunity to develop a comprehensive, long-term water management plan that will restore ecological health and improve water quality in the Bay-Delta. I very much want to see CALFED succeed. The stakes are too high, and the real water problems are far too serious. Having said that, however, I strongly believe that until CALFED gives increased water supply and area of origin water rights the serious attention they deserve, CALFED cannot possibly achieve its environmental goals.

In particular, I am gravely concerned that the CALFED preferred alternative outlined in the draft programmatic EIR/EIS states that "while no new on-stream storage will be pursued, expansion of existing on-stream storage is being considered." I do not believe CALFED can offer real environmental solutions if we don't begin to seriously plan future storage options. The vague promises contained in the CALFED preferred alternative are unacceptable.

With the ever-increasing demands on an already constrained water supply, we won't have enough water for the legitimate needs of the Bay-Delta and environmental restoration efforts. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) projected in January of 1998 that the equivalent populations of Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and Utah will move to California by the year 2020. It is estimated that this drastic influx of an additional 15 million California residents will create a water deficit in California of at least 1.6 million acre feet in an average water year. DWR estimates that this water shortfall could mushroom to 7 million acre feet in a drought year. As a means of comparison, Shasta Lake, an important component of the Central Valley Project, holds only 4.6 million acre feet of water.

The only way we can serve CALFED's environmental goals in the face of this burgeoning population is to provide additional water storage. Regrettably, CALFED is far too fearful of the extremists within the environmental community and has overlooked the wide-ranging benefits of additional storage.

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As you are aware, California experiences wildly fluctuating weather patterns. During the last 20 years, California has experienced 9 wet years, 9 dry or critically dry years and 2 "normal" years. More water storage allows us to maintain important environmental restoration efforts even during times of uncertainty, including flushing the Delta and providing habitat improvement for fish and wildlife.

These extreme environmental groups typically oppose any new reservoir, claiming the structures are not "natural." Unfortunately, in its natural state California, is largely a desert. Strategically placed reservoirs allow us to catch water when it rains, or when the snows melt, and use that water during the dry season. It may not be "natural" according to the extreme environmentalists' definition, but it is essential to meeting the diverse water needs of California.

Our current system of reservoirs also provides critical flood protection for the citizens of California. The extreme environmental groups often downplay this important goal in favor of their environmental agenda. However, not only do these reservoirs protect human life and property, but they also protect against the devastating environmental damage that results from these floods. It is clearly a win-win for our citizens and our environment.

Regrettably, instead of seeking reasonable solutions to address our state's growing water needs, the extreme environmental movement has proposed carving up the dwindling water supply. They advocate for "conservation," which essentially constitutes taking water from our Northern California communities and businesses, including agriculture, our state's number one industry. Further, water experts at the California Department of Water Resources contend that we are quickly reaching the limits of decades-old water conservation strategies. I do not feel we should begin to take the opponents of additional water storage seriously, unless and until they can provide hard data to refute the volumes of DWR reports which clearly indicate that California is heading into an extremely dangerous water deficit situation.

Merely dividing up the existing water supply, including proposals to simply divert water from agriculture, do not provide us with reasonable, long-term solutions to California's water needs. If we are all going to "get better together," hurting agriculture and raiding our food supply do not meet that criteria. Unfortunately, the problem with diverting water from agriculture is that no one has yet devised a way to grow food without water. Taking water away from our farms would send food prices through the roof and severely impact California's agriculture industry, which provides approximately \$24.5 billion to the California economy and 1 out of every 10 jobs in our state. Finding additional water by wrecking agriculture is NOT a reasonable solution to our water problems.

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Additionally, I believe CALFED must provide Area of Origin Water Rights to protect the water needs of all Northern Californians. When the next drought does come to California, Northern California deserves guarantees from CALFED that the real water needs of Northern California will be met.